

## 2012 Human Services Budget Community Conversations

Table 2 with Councilmember Licata - Summary of Responses  
*Tuesday, May 31, 2011, Van Asselt Community Center*

**1. In light of reduced funding at the Federal and State levels and increasing pressures on the City's General Fund, how do you think the City should prioritize Human Services Department in the overall budget?**

Human Services is upstream work, not less important than police or fire.

Government will spend this \$\$ one way or the other, either as prevention activity or increased public safety expenses down the road.

Law enforcement and Human Services work goes hand and glove-you can't separate these issues out.

Community Involvement very important-block watch, encouraging/empowering citizens.

Programs for youth are important: Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative changes lives; empowers youth to become leaders in the community.

Programs for older adults also important, for example art classes offered at some of the senior centers provide a source of meaning and purpose.

Providing a variety of services from arts to sports are important for people of various ages and income groups.

**2. What do you think are the Human Services Department's core functions and what programs do you consider most important?**

*Participants wanted to know what percentage of the HSD budget was general fund and what was restricted, federal or grant dollars.*

*Participants gave suggestions on how to make cuts to departments:*

Don't give the illusion of doing something when we're not: for example, if we had a strong human services program and don't want to eliminate it completely so we keep one or two staff members in order to say we're delivering those services but in fact can't because we don't have the staff or resources, this is a disservice to

Don't give up the illusion of doing something when we're not-it's citizens want something different they need to cup up with a plan

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Eliminate a whole division: “death by 1000 paper cuts” is ineffective.

CM Licata mentioned that he’s heard the opposite from departments. They asked that we spare totally eliminating lines of services.

Some participants disagreed with this approach. One woman gave the example of a food stamp program which was targeted for budget cuts. Advocates were successful in getting the state to maintain a minimal level of service in hopes that the program could be beefed up when times are less lean.

If you cut one line of business don’t realize the high start up costs.

Participants noted that whatever is left has to have a strong foundation so we can build from them when the economy improves.

### **3. What can the City do that would reduce the need for human services?**

Prevention work on issues such as domestic and sexual violence.

Do a better job of providing tailored service to people instead of trying to put them in boxes and come up with a one size fits all approach.

Our table also discussed the fact that there are bigger forces at play and the need for human services cannot be eliminated at just the City level such as income inequality, defense spending.

### **4. How could departments outside of the Human Services Department do their work differently to meet their missions in ways that would *also* help Seattle residents meet their basic human needs? For instance: Parks, Public Safety, and Neighborhoods?**

Coordinate senior centers and parks older adults programs.

Consolidation among smaller depts. is probably a good thing.

Block watches are good examples of low cost ways to improve public safety. One participant noted that his active block watch has resulted in a 20% drop in crime.

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Also, cheap technology such as face book and twitter has made block watches easier to organize and

#### **5. Would you be willing to pay more in taxes to avoid a reduction in services for the Human Services Department?**

Most people were willing however, several pointed out that we should tax developers (in relationship to a Seattle Times article about incentive zoning)/collect taxes we're already entitled to.

One participant noted that non profits have lower salary scales and could do the same work that the city currently does and this would bring down city costs. For example King County Sexual Assault Resource Center and Harborview could provide the same level of service to victims of assault as crime prevention coordinators.